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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000273

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TAGS: PREL PHUM UNSC BM CH TH

SUBJECT: UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON BURMA: BURMESE EXILE COMMUNITY VIEWS

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) Exile community members are supportive of the draft resolution on Burma, but view China as key to resolving the current political stalemate. The release of five 88 Generation student leaders only served to reinforce the idea that the draft resolution generated pressure on the junta to show tangible signs of willingness to address the concerns of the international community absent UNSC punitive measures. Some in the exile community openly express they would prefer the US work with China to devise an acceptable agreement on encouraging democratization in Burma, or simply dangle the threat of a resolution over the heads of the junta indefinitely. End Summary.

UNSC RESOLUTION ON BURMA

¶12. (C) The USG efforts to table the resolution on Burma are universally appreciated by the exile community, according to the Embassy's Burmese contacts in Thailand. From political groups and media outlets to humanitarian focused exile organizations, all see the UNSCR on Burma as an important step. Differing views emerge on the possible outcome, but the over-arching theme that emerged from our discussions was that Burmese exiles are focused on how this resolution can be used by the international community as a launch point to discuss and/or pressure Burma into action.

¶13. (C) Despite profuse expressions of gratitude, the UNSC's perceived ability to address the current crisis in Burma varies, depending on whom you ask. A member of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) tempered his optimism with a healthy dose of realism when he said, "it took us 16 years to get to this point, so we do not expect to get a resolution in six months."

¶14. (C) A member of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma (AAPP) expressed a great deal of faith in the USG's and the UNSC's willingness to act on behalf of Burmese dissidents, but admitted to dwindling faith in other UN entities' ability to resolve their issues with Burma. The remarkably unremarkable visit of UN Under Secretary General Gambari in November was cited as one example.

RELEASE OF 88 GENERATION LEADERS

¶15. (C) Exile community members working in Thailand's

academic community credited the pressure generated on the regime from the draft UNSC resolution with influencing the timing of the release of five political prisoners associated with the pro-democracy uprising of 1988 (the so-called "88 Generation") Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kway, Min Zeya, and Myint Aye. They speculated that the Chinese are pushing the regime to demonstrate its willingness to act in concert with the desires of the international community. Exile community academics commented that the release of a few prisoners last week, absent the names of any prominent activists, was not enough for the Chinese to defend Burma in the UN Security Council.

¶16. (C) After confessing ignorance on the UNSC technical procedures, one member of the exile community commented that this kind of result demonstrated that it might be better to keep the idea of a resolution afloat rather than bringing it to a full vote. This comment tracks with the view of another exile community member who suggested that such demonstrable results, such as the release of key pro-democracy activists, may prompt China to request the US withdraw the resolution and wait for more positive developments.

#### CHINESE DIPLOMACY

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¶17. (C) Some in the exile community note that the Generals in Burma may respond to international pressure by speeding up their National Convention process. The logic being a quick convention process will dissuade ASEAN countries from taking a hard line on Burma. Several sources told us that the Chinese diplomatic community is passing messages directly to the Generals to this effect. Various exile community groups added that they were aware of a delegation of exiles that

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went to China recently and met with Chinese officials at the working level.

¶18. (C) All members of the exile community seem to concur with the idea that any solution to the current quagmire in Burma necessitates the involvement of China. From the student groups to the activists, the question on the tip of every tongue revolves around the level of U.S. engagement with China.

¶19. (C) Members of the AAPP expressed a clear interest in seeing the United States cooperate with China on a solution in Burma. In their views, Chinese influence in the region is undeniable, and they believe a lasting solution in Burma cannot be resolved without Chinese buy-in and possibly a Chinese-generated solution.

#### VIEWS ON ASEAN

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¶10. (C) Exile community members believe ASEAN is showing signs of impatience with Burma, which manifests itself in a willingness of some nations to speak out against the regime's abysmal human rights record, and its snail-pace approach to democratization. However, none of our contacts believed that ASEAN would act as a unified body in support of the UNSC resolution on Burma. Concerns regarding Indonesia in particular and Singapore to a lesser degree continued to surface.

#### OUTLOOK

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¶11. (C) The Burmese exiles with whom we spoke expressed gratitude for the USG's strong efforts at the UN to push for democratization in Burma. They conveyed their hope that we would continue to advocate forcibly for reforms. Some expressed concern, however, that other hot-spots, such as Iraq and Sudan, would distract governments from the situation

in their home country.

COMMENT

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¶12. (C) Whether or not the UNSCR passes, exiles in Thailand have taken note of and welcomed our effort to focus top-level attention on the plight of those oppressed in Burma. We are surprised, however, by their perception that the PRC could play a much more positive role in a solution to Burma's impasse. This may reflect wishful thinking on the part of the exiles, clever and effective diplomacy with exiles by the PRC or its sympathizers, or both.

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